

Co-Teaching: The Future of Education

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

Co-teaching is a strategy that has become increasingly popular in the world of education. With many schools adopting inclusion classrooms, co-teaching has become a strategy to meet the needs of all learners. The analysis of seven different co-teaching strategies gives an idea of the effect co-teaching can have on student learning and achievement. In my research component of the project, I define co-teaching, analyze the seven co-teaching strategies, look into studies that have been conducted on the effect of co-teaching and determine teachers' roles in the classroom. Secondly, the brochure I created is a tool for pre-service teachers to use when determining how co-teaching can be implemented in their classrooms. Finally, I have documented my reflections from my co-teaching experience in a journal. This journal serves as a representation of my student teaching semester and how co-teaching played a role in the development of my students and classroom.

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Why has co-teaching become one of the new buzzwords for education? With the demands of standardized testing increasing every year, teachers must find new ways to divide their time, resources and effort in the classroom. For many elementary schools, co-teaching has become a way to utilize teachers' time wisely. Co-teaching is two or more teachers delivering instruction at the same time in the same physical space to a heterogeneous group of students (Friend, 2014, p. 3). Having two teachers in the classroom allows for optimal instructional time and more opportunities for students to work one on one and in small groups with the teacher. Another reason why co-teaching has become so popular is because of the large amount of students with special needs spending most of their school day in the general education classroom.

Inclusion rates have increased over the years and many teachers and parents want these students to spend as much time in the general education classroom with their peers. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 90% of students with disabilities will be educated in the general education classroom for a minimum of 80% of the school day (Peeler, 2010, p. 6). Because of this, general education teachers often partner with special education teachers or reading specialists to co-teach in their classrooms. However, according to Marilyn Friend, author of *Co-Teach! Building and Sustaining Effective Classroom Partnerships in Inclusive Schools*, the key to successful co-teaching is that both teachers are peers in terms of licensure and employment status. She believes it is vital for the teachers to be colleagues in order to share responsibility and accountability of the students.

In addition to the increase in students with disabilities being taught in the general education classroom, there is also a legislative basis for co-teaching. From 1975 to 2001, educators looked to the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* and *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* to solve problems regarding the rights of students with disabilities and appropriate strategies and accommodations for them (Friend, page 26). However, the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* in 2001 altered the approach taken to serve students with disabilities. ESEA required teachers to implement research based strategies, include nearly all students in mandated assessments, hold school districts accountable for the education received by all students, and provide options to parents ensuring them that their children will reach the increasingly high standards set for them (Friend, 2014, p. 26). Many schools now implement a system where teacher evaluations include a measure of student achievement and student growth. With these increased legislative expectations, many schools believe co-teaching is the best way to move forward in making sure all students are reaching their full potential.

In order for co-teaching to be successful in the classroom, there are a few factors that must be present. Both teachers must talk during instruction, take a lead role in the classroom, give permission and direction without checking with the other teachers, work with all students and be considered teachers by all students (Peeler, 2010, p. 13). When both teachers are viewed as role models and leaders in the classroom, students are more likely to be engaged in instruction from both teachers. It is also important for teachers to view students as full members of their co-taught class. Instead of using phrases like “my students” or “your students”, teachers must

refer to the students as “our students” (Friend, 2014, p. 5). This allows all students to feel that they are all equal members of the classroom and receive the same amount of attention from both teachers.

Although there are many combinations of co-teaching (special education teacher/general education teacher, ESL teacher/general education teacher, speech-language therapist/general education teacher, media specialist/general education teacher, literacy or math coach/general education teacher, gifted-talented educator/general education teacher), co-teaching is not just one teacher helping out another teacher. Co-teaching is not “an extra set of hands in the classroom” or one person teaching Monday and Tuesday while the other teacher takes the lead on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday (Friend, 2014, p. 9). Co-teaching needs to be a partnership in which both teachers are actively involved in the classroom on a daily basis.

In Elizabeth Stein’s article “Don’t Just Co-Teach, Experience”, she outlines the three major benefits of co-teaching: sparking curiosity in students, accelerating personal growth, and engaging in a powerful learning process. Because there are two teachers present in the classroom, there are more opportunities for students to engage in small group work and collaborate with others. The collaborative process can result in higher student achievement, increase self-esteem, promote positive peer relationships, and develop high order thinking skills (Stein, 2016, p.1). Stein goes on to say that co-taught classrooms have the ability to implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL is based on “evidence from neuroscience that no two brains learn in the same way and learner variability is the norm” (UDL

Intersections, 2013, p.1). Because of the academic and social range of learners in an inclusive classroom, UDL is used to reach all types of learners by providing a curriculum that involves multiple instructional strategies.

So has co-teaching shown to be effective in the classroom? Several studies have been conducted throughout the years to identify what aspects of co-teaching are beneficial and whether the teaching approach affects student performance and achievement. Hang and Rabren (2009) studied 45 co-teachers, 31 general educators and 14 special educators. The students studied were in grades 1-10 and 58 of them were learners with disabilities. Data was collected through an author-conducted survey, student records and observations in the co-taught classroom (Friend, 2014, p. 32). The results showed that students with disabilities improved significantly in academic achievement compared to the previous year when they were not in a co-taught classroom. Their achievement scores in reading, language arts and mathematics met grade level and the special education teachers believe the students received sufficient support in the co-taught classroom. However, the results conducted from this study also showed that students with disabilities had more discipline issues in the co-taught classroom.

Another study found focused on the effect of co-teaching for the English Language Learners. Pardini (2006) studied public schools in St. Paul, Minnesota. This district was offering ELL services to almost every school because of the increase in the Hispanic population. The study showed that the co-teaching classroom closed the gap between ELL students and general education students. In reading achievement, the gap between ELL students and other students went from

13 percent to 6 percent on high stakes testing and the gap in math went from 6.7 percent to 2.7 percent (Friend, 2014, p. 33).

A comprehensive study conducted by Walther-Thomas evaluated co-teaching models in 23 schools in eight different school districts. The results from the study showed an overall improvement in academic and social skills of low-achieving students, improved attitudes and self-concepts reported by students with disabilities and more positive peer relationships between all students (Nevin, 2013, p. 12). The conductors of the study believed these results were because the students received more attention and time from teachers. Teachers and students from this study also reported that there was an increased sense of community in the classrooms and an increase in support.

According to researchers Elizabeth Keefe and Veronica Moore, the primary benefit of co-teaching for students with disabilities is the elimination of the stigma of being in special education. Likewise, they found that one of the biggest benefits of co-teaching for students without disabilities is that they are able to receive the individualized help and modifications that they would not normally receive in a classroom taught by one teacher (Hanover, p.15). Keefe and Moore studied the challenges of co-teaching as well and determined that most co-teachers believe there is not enough time to effectively plan a co-taught curriculum. Other co-teachers also feel that they have not been adequately trained to accommodate an inclusive classroom and to meet the expectations of collaborating with a colleague in the classroom every day.

Although the basic idea of co-teaching remains the same in many schools, there are various co-teaching strategies that can be implemented in the classroom. Each strategy is meant for a certain setting in the classroom and has each teacher playing a different role. Seven of the most common co-teaching strategies will be analyzed to determine what their strengths and weaknesses are and when the strategies would be most appropriately utilized in the classroom.

In the "One Teach, One Observe" strategy, one teacher has primary responsibility while the other gathers specific observational information on the students (*Co-teaching strategies*, 2011, p. 1). This strategy is successful if the observing teacher has a focused and purposeful observation. This teacher can focus on observing a specific behavior or reading strategy then take the gathered information and collaborate with the other teacher to apply it to future instruction. An example of this strategy is if a student is struggling or falling behind in class, one teacher can observe the student's behavior throughout the day. How long does he take to answer a question? When does he become frustrated? How is he being distracted? This data collected can be helpful in deciding the next steps to take for this student. While this student is being observed, the other teacher is continuing to teach the lessons for the day. Data collecting and decision-making is an integral part of education. In order to determine if students need to be tested, if RTI (Response to Intervention) needs to be implemented, or if content needs to be taught in an alternative modality, data on the students must be collected. Once teachers have sufficient data, they are able to make decisions that will have a better chance of positively influencing the students and overall classroom environment.

The "One Teach, One Assist" strategy is an extension of the "One Teach, One Observe" strategy. Instead of just observing students, the second teacher assists with student work, monitors behavior and corrects assignments (*Co-teaching strategies*, 2011, p. 1). One teacher will take the lead in the overall instruction while the other teacher assists students who have trouble comprehending the material. Some advantages of this strategy are that students can receive more personalized and individual assistance, behavior can be easily monitored, and time is saved distributing materials. The disadvantage of this strategy is that students may view one teacher as the "lead teacher" and the other teacher as more of an aide or assistant (Friend, 2011, p. 1).

In the "Station Teaching" strategy, the teachers divide the instructional content and each take a group to teach (*Co-teaching strategies*, 2011, p. 1). Once instruction is taught and an activity as been completed at the station, the teachers switch groups and teach the same lesson to the new group of students. Some advantages of this strategy are that the students have the opportunity to work in small groups, students are engaged in hands-on learning, there are more likely to be less discipline problems, and each teacher has a clear instructional responsibility (Friend, 2011, p.2). Some disadvantages of this strategy are that it requires a lot of planning and the stations must be paced correctly so that each teacher's lesson ends at the same time.

The "Parallel Teaching" strategy involves splitting the class in half. Each teacher has the same content standards to teach but only instructs half of the students. Some advantages of this teaching strategy include separating students

who need to be apart, teachers can work with small groups, and teachers can teach the content in their own ways (Friend, 2011, p. 1). Some possible disadvantages of this strategy are that the teachers must be on the same page in regards to what objectives the students need to learn and there must be enough space in the classroom to accommodate two different groups of students.

In the "Supplemental Teaching" strategy, one teacher works with students on grade level material while the other teacher reteaches content to students who are struggling to stay on pace (*Co-teaching strategies*, 2011, p. 1). Some advantages of this strategy are that students who are struggling will receive more one on one attention and be able to have material retaught to them, while students who are at grade level are able to move on with content without being held back by other students. A disadvantage of this strategy is that not all of the students will be working at the same pace; therefore, they will be at different points in the curriculum.

The "Alternative Teaching" strategy involves each teacher teaching the same content but in alternative ways (*Co-teaching strategies*, 2011, p. 1). For example, one teacher may teach a lesson on fractions using manipulatives while another teacher may teach the same lesson using pictures or a computer game. One advantage of this strategy is that students with different learning styles have the opportunity to learn content in a way that makes sense to them. Also, teachers can both display their strengths in the classroom by teaching in the method they feel most qualified or experienced in. Some disadvantages of this strategy are that there must be adequate

space in the classroom for both groups and the teachers must make sure they are teaching the same content (Friend, 2011, p. 2).

The "Team Teaching" co-teaching strategy is when both teachers are actively involved in the lesson, plan instruction, assist students, answer questions, and lead the classroom (*Co-teaching strategies*, 2011, p. 1). Some advantages of this strategy are that both teachers are seen as equals, both are actively involved in instruction, and both are able to take creative risks in the classroom. Some disadvantages of this strategy are that there is a lot of extra planning involved and the teachers must make sure to clearly define their roles so that all students see them as equals (Friend, 2011, p. 3).

Although each strategy contains strengths and weaknesses, each one brings different qualities to the classroom setting and can be beneficial if implemented correctly. Co-teaching requires intense planning, effective communication between teachers, an agreed upon discipline plan and the implementation of both teachers being seen as equals by the students. Although co-teaching takes a lot of pre-planning and communication skills, the results of student achievement can be worth it if the strategies are implemented correctly. Co-teaching allows students to receive more personalized attention, additional support, and brings a sense of community to the classroom. With two teachers in the classroom, students are able to engage in more hands-on small group activities and express creativity. Co-teaching has become the future of education because it provides each learner with the assistance, support and tools they need to succeed.

Co-teaching has also significantly impacted my student teaching. I went into this semester viewing teaching as more of an independent role. I knew that I would need to work with other teachers, my principal and the special education teacher at times, but I did not realize the extent to which collaboration is involved in education. It is imperative to be able to effectively communicate with others in order to best meet the needs of the students in the classroom. I like that co-teaching allows educators to brainstorm ideas with one another and share observations. I believe that this allowed my cooperating teacher and I to be able to decide the best teaching strategies and authentic activities for our students. I also like that co-teaching involves a lot of small group work. Working with smaller groups allowed me to get to know my students better and really understand the skills they were struggling to master. Despite having many positive experiences with co-teaching, there are a few characteristics about it that I would change. For example, I think it is difficult for students to see both teachers as equals. Many times, students will prefer one teacher to the other, which can cause issues in the classroom environment. Co-teaching also involves a lot of extra planning time and a teacher's time outside of the classroom is very limited. Nevertheless, I think the benefits of co-teaching outweigh the negative aspects of it. Throughout this semester, I have learned that two heads are truly better than one. Co-teaching allowed me to grow as an educator because I was able to take creative risks in the classroom, really get to know my students, collaborate with colleagues and become confident in my ability to educate learners.

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Co-Teaching Journal

This journal is a representation of my student teaching this semester and how I utilized co-teaching in my classroom. For the Ball State elementary and special education program, there are ten InTASC standards that we follow and reflect on throughout our teaching experiences. These standards cover topics such as learner differences, instructional strategies, assessment and professional development. Below, I have used the ten InTASC standards as a tool to guide my reflection. I have reflected on how I practiced each standard in the classroom and connected that practice to my co-teaching experiences. This semester, I was teaching in a fourth grade inclusion classroom, which means I had several students in my class with learning and emotional disabilities. The special education teacher and her aide were in my classroom for about two hours each day. I collaborated with the special education teacher and my cooperating fourth grade teacher throughout the entire semester.

InTASC 1 (Learner Development) - The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.

In my student teaching placement, varying learner development has been very evident in my classroom. There are many students with learning disabilities, a few students with ADHD and a couple high ability students. Because of this, I have recognized that each student works at a different pace and has different strengths and weaknesses. I have tried to get to know each of my students and observe their patterns of learning. I have also realized the importance of challenging each student and realizing that all students cannot be taught the same way.

Co-teaching has proved to be beneficial in regards to this standard because my cooperating teacher and I have been able to get to know the students in different ways and at different times. We often share qualities and characteristics we have noticed about the students and brainstorm ways to meet student needs. We also

have many higher-level students in my class so we attended a workshop together where we learned strategies to appropriately challenge these types of students. Having a colleague to bounce ideas off of with has been a huge help in creating challenging and authentic experiences for our students.

InTASC 2 (Learning Differences) - The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.

From my student teaching placement, I have realized that each student comes to school with a different background and a different struggle. One student in my class has reoccurring seizures and her father just lost his job. She also has a learning disability that makes her classroom work a little more difficult for her. I have spent a lot of time with this student, making sure she stays caught up on her work while also making sure she feels like she belongs in the classroom. I have realized that as a teacher, I have to be open-minded because I may never know what my students are struggling with at home.

Identifying learner differences is a vital part of co-teaching. My teacher and I have often used the "One Teach, One Observe" strategy. This involved one of us teaching a lesson and the other observing student behavior and achievement. There is one student who struggles with mathematics a lot and continuously scores poorly on tests and assignments. In order to identify the problem, my cooperating teacher observed the student during a math lesson on improper fractions that I taught. My cooperating teacher realized that the student was having difficulty focusing. He would often play with his fingernails, stare into space or glance around the room. He

rarely had his eyes and attention on the lesson. Because of my cooperating teacher's opportunity to observe the student, we were able to collaborate on ideas to help the student focus and perform better on math assignments.

InTASC 3 (Learning Environments) – The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborate learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning and self-motivation.

There are many students in my classroom who have learning disabilities or who learn in different ways. While teaching a few lessons on adjectives in small groups, I noticed that some students really excelled in small groups when they usually do not speak up at all during whole group lessons. By working with them in a secluded setting, I was able to pick up on their learning styles and change my instruction to better meet their needs. By leading and teaching more in the classroom, I have noticed that as a teacher it is my job to make sure every student receives an equal opportunity to learn content in a way that helps them comprehend and be able to practice the material.

My cooperating teacher, the special education teacher and I have utilized the "Station Teaching" strategy throughout the semester. In this strategy, we each take a group of students (usually grouped by ability) and teach a lesson to them in a small group setting. Then, the groups rotate so that we teach the same lesson three times to the three sets of students. Because the students are typically grouped by ability, we are able to focus on the specific needs of that group. Also by having smaller groups, I am able to get to know my students better and understand their strengths and weaknesses. The one thing I did not like about this strategy was that because

the students were always grouped by ability, they did not get the opportunity to work with other students which I think inhibited social interaction and the sense of community.

InTASC 4 (Content Knowledge) - The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.

As I learn more about becoming a teacher, I realize how important it is to know the content. Students are constantly asking questions and attempting to understand material. It is important as a teacher, to be able to provide students with multiple examples and provide answers (or ways to arrive at answers) to students' questions. Also, the Indiana Standards lead the curriculum so it is important to understand how content relates to the standards. I have been studying the fourth grade standards these past few weeks in order to better understand how to map a curriculum and plan units.

In co-teaching, I believe understanding content and the state standards are vital. This also requires constant communication between the co-teachers. Although I independently planned a unit for my fourth graders, I constantly went to my cooperating teacher for advice on which standards I needed to address and ideas on how to make sure the students took away the knowledge content they needed. To me, one of the biggest benefits of co-teaching is having a colleague to collaborate with. I believe with two teachers there are more opportunities to come up with and implement engaging and authentic activities for students.

InTASC 5 (Application of Content) – The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.

Throughout my student teaching experience, I have realized how important it is to not only know your content, but to be able to apply it and teach it in a way that reaches students. Many of my students have trouble paying attention during lessons. In order to fix this, I have tried to make my lessons more appealing and relate to my students' lives. For example, I have used story problems in my math lessons that involve scenarios that relate to my students. I also try to call on students who do not always have their hands up. By doing this, I am ensuring that every student is paying attention and attempting to understand the content being taught.

My cooperating teacher and I used the "Alternative Teaching" strategy to reach our students on all spectrums. In this strategy, we teach the same content through different modalities in order to engage every type of learner. By doing this, we were able to help students better understand content. For example, when teaching a math lesson on fractions and decimals, I had the students use manipulatives to make fractions into decimals while my cooperating teacher used pictures and tables. By doing this, students who learn better visually or kinesthetically were able to better comprehend the material. What I did not like about this strategy though is that some students, especially the higher-level students, became restless learning the same material twice because they did not need the review since they had already grasped the content.

InTASC 6 (Assessment) – The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher's and learner's decision making.

During my unit plan project this semester, my students took a pretest over tall tales. I evaluated the pretests to see what topics students already had a grasp on and what topics students had never been exposed to. Because of this, I realized how important activating background knowledge is. As a teacher, I do not want to waste time teaching content to my students that they already know. However, I also want to make sure that I effectively teach the content my students have never been exposed to. Pretests are effective in that they show the teacher what students already know and what students need practice on. I also realized that assessments do not always have to be tests. Throughout my unit, I evaluated my students' progress through assignments, oral comprehension questions, group discussions and a project. By utilizing multiple assessment methods, I was able to get an accurate depiction of the student's understanding of the material.

Assessment is a huge part of teaching and with the increased pressure of standardized testing, I believe co-teaching can be beneficial to improving assessments. My cooperating teacher and I used the "Supplemental Teaching" strategy to help with assessing and re-teaching students. After students would take their math tests, we would grade them together. If students received a score less than 75%, we would have them do corrections and re-teach material. One of us would continue on with a lesson while the other teacher would re-teach to the students who did not understand the content. I liked this strategy because it allowed

the students who understood the material to move on but gave struggling students extra support. However, this sometimes caused the struggling students to fall behind in class because they were spending more time being re-taught the lessons.

InTASC 7 (Planning for Instruction) - The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learner and community context.

Throughout my student teaching placement, I have recognized the importance of planning ahead. In order to be properly prepared to teach a lesson, it is imperative to plan out what content and skills you will teach as well as the method you will take to get there. For my math lessons, I wanted to start using more manipulatives and applicable examples. In order to do this, I had to plan my instruction in advance so that I could find a way to reach the students while teaching. One of my math lessons was on finding sales tax and change back. I talked to the students about the importance of knowing this because when they grow up and start going to the store by themselves, they need to know how much change they should receive and how sales tax works. We did examples of things they would actually buy to make the examples more real and applicable to their lives. I believe this helped in my instruction because the students were more eager to learn because they realized the significance of the topic.

With co-teaching, planning instruction is one of the things I have learned takes the most effort and time. In order to be on the same page as your co-teacher, it is vital to spend time after school planning lessons, activities, standards and assessments. My cooperating teacher and I spent numerous hours after school

preparing for the next day's lessons and strategizing on the ways we would teach content to the students. When we were preparing for the ISTEP tests, my cooperating teacher and I decided which math and reading topics we were going to focus on and prioritize. Then, we planned the methods in which we would teach the content and what objectives we had for the students. We then implemented the "Parallel Teaching" strategy. This involved us both teaching the same content in the same way to half of the class. I believe this strategy was helpful to our students because it allowed them to work in smaller groups and be more comfortable asking questions.

InTASC 8 (Instructional Strategies) – The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.

I think it is very important to present material to students in many different ways. The students in my class are varying types of learners. Some learn better visually while others learn better orally or kinesthetically. When teaching fractions, I presented visuals on the smart board, had students use manipulatives and had students draw pie charts and pictures to represent mixed numbers. Also while doing a place value lesson, I had students play a game. They were struggling to determine the different place values in numbers, especially numbers with decimals. So in order to help this issue, I had the students play a game where they had different colored cards for each place value. The students had to place their individual numbers in order and then read them aloud to me to practice correctly reading numbers. Because this game was hands on, many of the students began to better understand

the concept of place value because they were able to physically work the problems out.

Co-teaching really enhances the ability to implement instructional strategies. I believe this was especially true with the strategy of "Team Teaching". This is the strategy that my cooperating teacher and I used most often in the classroom. With "Team Teaching", we both were actively involved in the lesson and engaging the students. Because there were two of us planning and teaching, we are able to experiment more creatively and try alternate instructional strategies to meet the students' needs. For example, when teaching a unit on fairy tales, I taught guided reading strategies to my students while my cooperating teacher focused on having the students utilize illustrations to comprehend the text. We both became masters of our instructional strategies so that we could instruct the students to the best of our ability. This also gave the students various methods to use when reading and comprehending text. I believe "Team Teaching" is the most effective co-teaching strategy because it allows both teachers to play an active role in the classroom and aid student learning and achievement.

InTASC 9 (Professional Learning and Ethical Practice) - The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.

I attended a math conference earlier in the semester with my cooperating teacher and a sixth grade teacher from my elementary school. At this conference, numerous textbook companies presented on their programs and how they can be

implemented in the classroom. My cooperating teacher is on the committee in charge of picking the math program that the school will use next year. After attending this conference, I realized how important of a job that is. The entire school uses the same program and each one is different in how it is implemented and appeals to students. Teachers have to consider which program will most effectively meet the needs of their students. I learned that the same program cannot always be used for years and years. New math programs are constantly coming out and it is important to stay up to date and find a program that will be appealing to students.

Co-teaching is all about learning new strategies and practices to utilize in the classroom. My cooperating teacher and I attended various workshops this semester that allowed us to gain new insights on ways to reach our students. We attended one workshop together that solely focused on co-teaching strategies. The presenter discussed how important communication and cooperation is in the field of co-teaching. My cooperating teacher and I have taken the time to get to know each other. We now understand each other's strengths, weaknesses, personality traits and teaching styles, which has helped us tremendously when planning and teaching together.

InTASC 10 (Leadership and Collaboration) – The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession.

During my student teaching placement, I have seen the results of positive relationships among colleagues and parents. I have been able to attend and

participate in three of my students' case conferences. In these conferences, parents and teachers work together to identify issues the student is having and problem solve ways to fix these issues. Case conferences truly are a collaborative process because all participants lend ideas and explain what they notice about the student. When a case conference is over, it is vital that both the teachers and parents are on the same page in regards to the next steps that need to be taken for the student. The week after one of my student's conferences, I realized how much his effort and work ethic improved. The student had more stamina and was able to focus more and get assignments done. I believe this was the result of the teachers and parents agreeing on ways to help the student succeed.

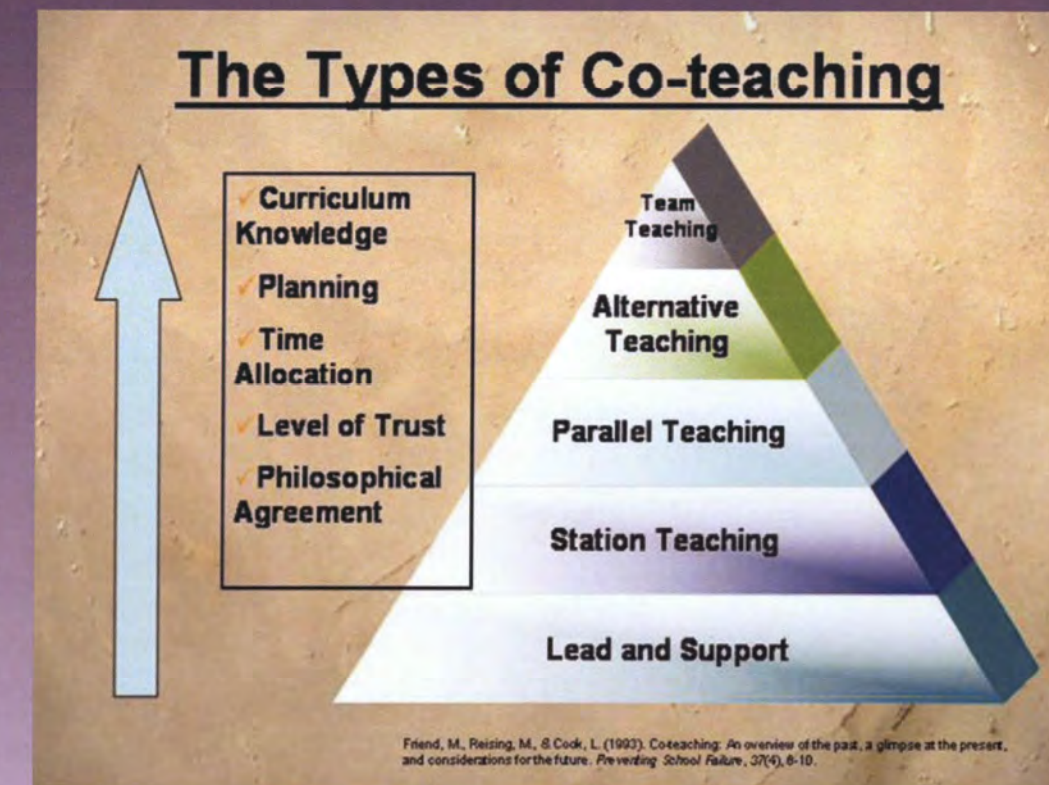
I believe having co-teachers can be beneficial to creating positive relationships with parents and the community. Because we have two teachers in my classroom, we have been able to really get to know the students and pick up on their learning styles and academic needs. When conferencing with parents, this is helpful because it allows us to give many examples on specific behaviors of the students. I think co-teachers can also help advance the profession of teaching because it truly is a collaborative process. Even if teachers do not have another teacher in their classroom, they still will have to collaborate with their principal, special education teacher, paraeducator, teachers of different grade levels and teachers from different skills. Developing effective communication skills is so important and I believe by working with my cooperating teacher and the special education teacher all semester, I am now better at working with others and sharing ideas.

"It's more important than ever that educators collaborate to continually improve and support the success of each learner. " –Dr. Gene Carter

Co-Teaching Strategies

There are several different strategies that can be implemented in a co-teaching classroom. Each strategy involves both teachers collaborating to best serve the needs of their students. Co-teachers are meant to use various strategies throughout the year in their classroom setting.

One Teach, One Observe	One Teach, One Assist	Station Teaching	Parallel Teaching	Supplemental Teaching	Alternative Teaching	Team Teaching
One teacher has primary responsibility of the classroom while the other teacher observes specific student behavior and performance	One teacher has primary responsibility of the classroom while the other teacher monitors behavior, assists with student work and corrects assignments	The teachers divide the instructional content and each take a group to teach. Then, the groups switch so the students experience both lessons.	The class is split in half; each teacher takes half of the class to teach and both teach the same content standards but in their own ways and lessons	One teacher works with students on grade level material while the other teacher re-teaches content to struggling students	The two teachers teach the same content but in alternative methods such as manipulatives, pictures or graphs	Both teachers are actively involved in lesson planning, instruction, leading the classroom and discipline





My Co-Teaching Experience

Throughout my student teaching experience at Riley Elementary in New Castle, Indiana, I have utilized various co-teaching strategies. I teach in a fourth grade inclusion classroom meaning there are several students with disabilities in the classroom and the special education teacher and her aide come into the classroom for two hours every day. My cooperating teacher and I mostly use the team teaching strategy. We brainstorm and lesson plan together after school and come up with activities, teaching models and higher order thinking questions for the students. We both serve as leaders in the classroom and implement discipline. The students see us as equals, which I think is very important in order for co-teaching to be successful. My cooperating teacher, the special education teacher and I have also implemented the station teaching strategy. I believe this is a successful strategy because it allows students to receive personalized attention. The students with disabilities are able to receive extra support in their groups and the higher-level students can be challenged further. I also believe this strategy allows teachers to focus on individual students' needs and see what kind of teaching modalities work best for them. In my experience, co-teaching has been extremely beneficial to my students and has allowed me to develop as an educator. I learned how to collaborate with colleagues, accommodate to student needs and be confident in my abilities to educate.

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